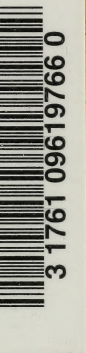


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# AIMS AND STRATEGY

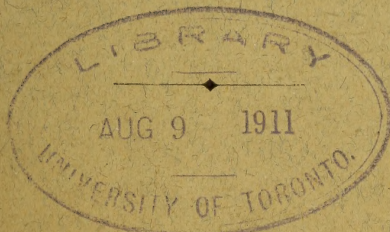
OF THE

# NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE



BY

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# AIMS AND STRATEGY

OF THE

## NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE.



THE methods of the National Service League are so peculiar, and its advocacy has varied so much, according to circumstances, that it has not always been easy to tell what it really wants. It complains of being misrepresented, and of not wanting what it is popularly supposed to; only a close observer perceives its unvarying consistency behind all avowals and forms of words. Recent experience of its controversial methods has taught the necessity of clear statement and of pinning it down to its own clearly avowed positions. What does it really want?

### EARLY AVOWALS.

In June, 1900, one of its most ardent and persistent leaders declared, "One line, and one line only, leads to complete national safety, and that is compulsory service for Home Defence."

The hand-book of the league, viz., "The Briton's first Duty, the Case for Conscription," by its secretary, Geo. F. Shee, M.A., published in 1901, declared (p. 174), "Three things are required to assure the safety of the British Empire. These are: (1) A strong Navy, *at least* equal in strength to the combined forces of any two Powers; (2) A highly trained, long-service Army for garrison and 'police' duties in India, and elsewhere; and (3) An immense Reserve of men—a Pan-Britannic Militia—consisting of all able-bodied white men throughout the Empire."

#### LATER STATEMENTS BY LORD ROBERTS.

This is the sense, then, in which we are to interpret its President's more recent historic phrase, adopted by Mr. Haldane, an "Armed Nation."

At the Annual Meeting of the National Service League, in June 1907, the President, Lord Roberts, is reported to have said, "What we do propose is that behind the Army and Navy there should be a *great national reserve of trained men*"; again "*Unless the voters of Great Britain are prepared to accept the law of citizen-training as it exists in the free democratic republic of Switzerland our labours will be in vain*"; again, "After having decided therefore upon the main principles which should govern our plans, we *proceeded to fit them to Mr. Haldane's proposals, that is, to the military system with which we shall have to deal.*"

A circular signed "Roberts" has been lately sent round the provincial newspapers, enclosing a letter from the secretary of the National Service League who writes,

“Mr. Haldane in creating the County Associations has rendered a great service to the country ; he has taken steps to enlist the forces of local patriotism and tradition in the cause of national defence. **These associations will be most valuable under a system of universal military training and will materially assist in the transition to that system.**”

All this is **conscription** or **forced military service**. The advocates of the National Service League disavow the term “conscription” when they do not boldly take the ground, as is done sometimes, that it is because it does not go far enough, and at present is only adopted by the smaller and most backward nations. They put instead, “universal training” or “citizen” training, or “compulsory volunteering,” or some similar euphemism. The term “conscription” comes from the Latin words, *con* and *scribere* (to write together, whence *conscriptum* and *conscriptio*), and means simply to en-register. As a Roman military technical term it meant to enrol, to levy, which is what does not go far enough for the League. This en-registering would be inseparable from the levying, and from any system of “universal” or “citizen” training. Everyone, however, understands what is meant by the term, in its popular usage and that it represents exactly what the National Service League people are after. The hand-book of the League, already referred to, which was published by subscription, used, as may be seen from the title, the term “conscription” on its first issue. It is a most remarkable fact that while in continental countries the system is discredited and hated, and everything that can be thought of is adopted to minimise its pressure, such

strenuous efforts should be made to introduce it in this country.

#### ILLUSTRATION NOT HAPPY.

The illustration chosen by Lord Roberts was not the most fortunate. Switzerland is not a "free Democratic Republic." It is a confederation of petty states (some of which are as reactionary as almost anything in Europe). Its proper title is the "*Swiss Confederation*." The Swiss "*law of citizen training*" is conscription just as much as the French or German "*laws of citizen training*." These methods differ, that is all. *Mr. Haldane's Territorial Army is subject to the Mutiny Act and to the authorities of the standing army, of which it forms a part. Compulsory service in this force, which is what Lord Roberts and the "National Service League" now seem to propose, would be conscription in the fullest sense of the term, and be far beyond either the "Swiss system" or the "compulsory volunteering" originally proposed.*

Another point to be noted is that, as in France and Germany, the Swiss have but *one* army, (whereas the British forces are scattered into various divisions or "*armies*," which makes the ordinary comparison very misleading), and the Swiss "*trained citizen*" is a soldier in this army. The chief difference is that instead of "*doing*" two years continuous military service, the "*service*" of the "*Swiss citizen*" is spread over a number of years by means of short terms of service in each year. There is much "*anti-militarism*" and discontent in industrial Switzerland. But having served its purpose for the time, the reasoning has been

discarded. The National Service League Kaleidoscope has changed once more, and fresh pleas are now pressed forward.

### USE OF FIGURES.

There is nothing in which the arguments of the National Service League are more unfair than in their use of figures, and especially the comparisons they make between the British forces and those particularly of Germany and France. The following, therefore, should be carefully noted :—

Britain's "*Home Army*" under arms in one year,

1906-7 :

Militia	...	...	...	...	...	132,408
Ditto, Channel Islands	...	...	...	...	...	3,160
Yeomanry	..	...	...	...	...	27,633
Volunteers	...	...	...	...	...	339,675
Proportion of Regular Army at home, say						90,000
						<hr/>
Under Arms	...	...	...	...	...	*592,876
						<hr/> <hr/>

This is more than France, whose *whole* force was stated as 537,230, and nearly as much as Germany, whose force under arms was stated as 600,667 (*proportionately much more than Germany, whose population is greater.*) In the statistics usually published, England's comparative force is given as the size of the regular foreign army. This is misleading, as the continental figures give every raw conscript and man under arms. The

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\* These figures could all be verified in any public library.

average of territorials and regulars in England may be taken as quite equal to the average of French or German conscript armies. Therefore, in common fairness the *whole English force should be given*.

As well as the above there are the Indian and colonial forces, together with the proportion of the regular army in India and other foreign garrisons ; making for the Empire an army of *nearly*, or little short of, **one million men under arms in a year** ; as a matter of fact it is really more. This is a greater force under arms than that of any other country.

British Empire forces under arms in one year,

1907-8 :

Militia	...	...	...	...	130,737
Ditto, Channel Islands	...	...	...	...	3,163
Volunteers	...	...	...	...	337,072
Yeomanry	...	...	...	...	27,638
					<hr/>
					498,610
Regular Army at home and abroad	...			...	169,723
Native Indian Army	...	...	...	...	149,535
Volunteers in India	...	...	...	...	28,363
Canadian Militia	...	...	...	...	54,097
Bermuda and Malta	...	...	...	...	2,543
Australian Militia	...	...	...	...	5,434
					<hr/>
					908,305
					<hr/>

1908-9 :

The figures for the year 1908-9, *i.e.*, after the creation of the "Territorial Army" and its substitution for the



Volunteers and Yeomanry, which accounts for the smaller number, run thus :—

British "*Home Army*" under arms in 1908-9 :

Militia, United Kingdom	...	...	130,737
Ditto, Channel Islands	...	...	3,163
Territorial Force	...	...	315,015
Regular Army at home...	...	...	130,148
			<hr/>
			579,063
			<hr/>

British Empire forces under arms in 1908-9 :

Militia	...	...	130,737
Ditto, Channel Islands	...	...	3,163
Territorial Army	...	...	315,015
			<hr/>
			448,915
Regular Army, home and colonial, exclusive of India	...	...	179,672
Colonial Corps	...	...	8,451

Indian Army :

British Regular Forces	...	76,155
Indian " "	...	154,110
British Volunteers	...	31,500
Indian Army Reserves	...	22,000
Imperial Service Troops	...	20,639
Local Corps	...	5,250
Military Police	...	28,340
		<hr/>
		337,994
Canadian Militia...	...	57,068
Burmuda and Malta	...	2,862
Australian Military Forces (Total)	...	103,086
New Zealand Forces	...	15,952
		<hr/>
		1,154,000*
		<hr/>

\*Authorities : "Army Estimates, 1908-9"; "Statesman's Year Book, 1909," pages 52, 54, 95, 243, 272; "Hazell's Annual, 1909," pages 30 and 32.

## RESERVES.

Were the "reserves" based on the same principle as in Continental countries and *every one who has served in any of these forces counted*, British reserves might be found equal to those abroad. The reserve of the Canadian Militia (which would seem to be based on some such principle) is alone stated at "**one million.**"

In New Zealand the proportion of trained men to the total capable of bearing arms, is 10·2 per cent., being the largest in the Empire. Unless aggressive war all round is in view, or unless it requires ten Englishmen to fight one foreigner or savage as the case may be, it is monstrous to call for an increased military force. Yet a *Nation in arms is demanded*. Why and for what purpose? military or political?

## SPRUNG FROM OLDER MOVEMENT.

It must be remembered that the National Service League is the latest form of a movement which began early in the nineties. Its true position and aims cannot be rightly appreciated apart from the older movement, of which it is really the development. The beginning of this movement may be dated roughly from the visit of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wolseley, to Glasgow, where he demanded two fresh regiments straight off for the defence of the country. It may be dated even earlier—to a meeting at Birmingham, presided over by Mr. J. Chamberlain, when General Wolseley advocated universal compulsory training as a splendid school of physical and moral training for young men.

## HISTORY OF THIS MOVEMENT.

The outcome of the General Election of 1900—the “Khaki Election” as it was termed—was the return of a Conservative Government pledged to a measure of Army reform.

A Commission was named to inquire into and report on the Auxiliary Forces. The Chairman was one of the persons who subscribed to the publishing of the “Briton’s First Duty.” On the Commission was also a pressman from the *Morning Post* newspaper. Many sittings were held, much inquiry was made. The majority of the Commission, including the ducal Chairman and the pressman, reported as follows in favour of :—Forced military service for one year continuously ; short periods of service in following years ; a standing paid-all-the-year-round force of officers—(this seems to have been the main thing) ; the existing Auxiliary Forces, such as militia, volunteers, etc., to be abolished.

The report gave rise to much comment, the gist of which came to this, that “it was rather too much at first.” The National Service League published a long letter in the *Morning Post* ; the letter was signed by the chief members of the League. It disapproved nothing in the report of the “Commission.” The letter mentioned “*our neighbours, who have had actual experience of compulsory service and whose economic progress is undoubted.*” Again it stated : “*The marked increase in physique recorded among certain continental peoples is distinctly ascribed to military training.*” No proof, however, was given, and affirmation is not proof.

Many persons, including the late Mr. Arnold Forster, objected to the conclusion of the report,

on the ground of expense. The *Morning Post* undertook to reply to such persons. It stated (22/9/04) ; " *But no one, except Mr. Arnold Forster, supposes that men serving as a duty would be paid a shilling a day. The shilling a day is at present the inducement to a man to become a soldier. If it is his duty and he must go, he needs no pay but merely pocket money. In continental armies the allowance is a penny or two a day.*" Here is what things are to come to, stated even more plainly on the part of its advocates than by those who are against the change. It is needless to remark that the *Morning Post* is read by the "classes" and not by the "masses."

The Chairman of the "Commission on Auxiliary Forces" was the seconder of the Bill of Lord Roberts in the House of Lords.

Both this report (certain to be dug up again when needed) and the debate in the House of Lords point to one thing, i.e., a big Conscript Army, to the loss of the "masses" and the profit of the "classes."

#### CONNECTION OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE LEAGUE.

Meanwhile, where does the National Service League come in? It was formed for the avowed object, as reported in "Hazell's Annual," and similar authorities, year by year, "to secure the legislative adoption of universal naval and military training for national defence." The "*Daily Mail Year Book*" for 1910 (p.273) rightly includes its objects in an article on "Conscription." "Hazell's Annual," in its last issue, changes the statement of its object into "The aim of the

National Service League is to add the **principle of compulsion** to the Territorial Army Scheme." This is the present direction of its aims, the present form of its activity. In the early part of 1906 it was rumoured that the National Service League would "before long change both its title and programme to harmonise better with the practical possibilities of the great principles which form the object of its existence." Precisely. Its method has been peculiar, but its aim has been consistent, in its working. It has gone straight for Conscription, but when signs have appeared of popular alarm it has withdrawn, and said: "Oh, we don't mean that—how wicked to say so!—we mean 'compulsory volunteering'"; or, "we mean 'universal compulsory service,' and that is a very different thing." During the discussion on the Army Bill, last session, in the House of Lords, Lord Lansdowne, in a speech, declared that the "debate would seriously affect the position of your Lordships' House"; that the "Bill is an attack on the Territorial System"; that it was "an affirmation that the voluntary system has been tried, and failed"; that we "desire to substitute a system based on compulsion"; and, finally, that it embodied "*a system not in accordance with the Territorial system, but which is described, and I think properly described, by representatives of the War Office as entirely antagonistic to it.*" If that be so, it is very suggestive that the aim of the National Service League is now stated to be "to add the principle of compulsion to the Territorial Army Scheme." The one consistent element all through has been "the principle of compulsion"; the nation should be made to perceive this clearly, and all that it involves.

## LEADERSHIP OF LORD ROBERTS.

The movement received a fresh impetus by the adhesion of Lord Roberts, who resigned his Army position to become the leader of the League and its chief advocate. His example is to be followed, it is announced, by his follower, General Baden Powell, who is, in a similar way, devoting himself to another branch of the propaganda, which is even more cleverly and plausibly designed and pursued.

There is no doubt that the National Service League has reaped great advantage from the "Peter-the-Hermit" zeal of its President, Lord Roberts, during his crusade-campaign of the autumn of 1905, and the spring of 1906, as well as his frequent forays into our public life since. But so have the Rifle Range mania, the Boys' Bisley, the Boys' Brigade movement, Cadet Corps, and all the other branches of the militarising movement, as well as the National Service League itself. The statement of Lord Roberts's proposal was enough to show the wideness of his range. Everywhere—at towns meetings specially called, before Chambers of Commerce, in the Mansion House—everywhere, his expressed object was to "introduce Universal Service for home defence, and to train all boys and youths in rifle shooting." "What he wants to see," said the *Morning Advertiser*, "is the whole manhood of the nation as a great potential reserve of force"—the whole manhood of the Empire, as averred by Mr. Shee, which widens the area considerably." As the leading military member of the Defence Committee, to quote the *Daily News*, his advocacy at the Mansion House of "the desperate remedy of calling out the youth of the country under a system of compulsory military ser-

vice " made even that pacifist organ consider the position of affairs to be " really rather a serious matter."

The *Morning Advertiser* admitted—for the paper was franker than the advocate—that "*the scheme, of course, would come to very much the same thing as Conscription, although, as there seem to be a good many people who are afraid of the name, the name might very well be dispensed with.*"

#### SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES.

During this period, the zeal of the most fiery members of the League, who evidently were anxious to precipitate matters and forthwith achieve the subjugation of the democracy, could hardly be restrained both in the House of Lords and elsewhere.

In the Parliamentary Session of 1908, Captain Kincaid-Smith introduced a Bill, the object of which was apparently to divert the new Territorial Army to the purposes of the movement, and later, to emphasise his position, he resigned his seat and appealed to his constituency. Happily he found no support in that direction.

#### THE ARMY BILL OF 1909.

It is not necessary to follow the movement further in detail. Whatever the aims and arguments of the National Service League may have been, its present position is determined by its president in the introduction of his National Service Bill in May of last year. This was intended "to form an Act providing for Compulsory Service in the Territorial Force, and for that purpose to amend the Act of 1907 by which it was created." Happily, the Lords did not entertain the proposal, but

it represented the amended aim of the National Service League as stated in "Hazell's Annual."

Both Lord Lansdowne, the then leader of the Opposition, and Lord Crewe, the leader of the House, knocked the bottom out of the Bill by their speeches. The words of the former, already quoted, disposed of the philanthropic theory of "training," "development," etc., and showed the falseness of the praise of the Territorial System bestowed by the Conscriptionists. The latter

#### SPEECH OF LORD CREWE

accurately described the real aim of all these "training theories," that is, European war and a big Conscript Army; (1) to find employment for the sons of the richer classes in the augmented and huge staff of permanently paid officers which such a force would render necessary, and (2) to exploit the masses by having a cheap Army (see also the *Morning Post*), at the cost of the suffering of the womenfolk of the working people; since conscripts get only a few pence per day, nearly all of which they pay for their miserable dinners, so that the pinch of privation falls on their women.

Lord Crewe is reported to have said that the "Bill was founded on an invasion theory, but was least suited to meet that particular theory of invasion." "It is to apply to Ireland." . . . "To train and arm the whole of the Irish population, which you have described as disloyal." . . . "In 1857 and in 1900 we were in the position described, but we were not attacked. . . ." "The demand for compulsory land service was never made by responsible naval advisers of the Crown. . . ." "You will catch practically the whole of the rural popula-



tion, WHILE YOU WILL GET ONLY A SMALL PORTION OF THE URBAN POPULATION . . . “Once more I confess myself in agreement with the Duke of Northumberland, for he said, and truly, I think, ‘THAT WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO STOP HERE.’ “If you are to meet regular troops who land on our shores, you had much better go a little further, draw a distinction between home and foreign service, and make your troops liable to serve on the continent of Europe.” “The real issue obscured by talk of social advantages to boys in camp, is between voluntary and compulsory service, which I do not think that you will be able to limit.”

#### NOTES THEREON.

He puts his finger on the raw as to the rural population, etc. This is just how things work out on the Continent; miserable agriculture, worked chiefly by women, overworked, ill-fed; a huge rate of still-born children and child mortality; bad habits formed by men in camp and barrack; double the English rate of illegitimacy; more than double the English rate of suicides: this *both* in France and Germany. All facts, figures, and opinions of Continental experts (who scorn the notion of Conscription as a *moral* agency), go to contradict and counteract the loathsome hypocrisy, which puts forward Conscription as a philanthropic notion.

Lord Crewe satirically describes, in the words “WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO STOP HERE,” the real purpose of the movement. It is a question of *war* or *Peace*; either to go on as we have been doing, or to become an “armed nation” on the *very latest Continental pattern*, meddling in all European quarrels; to

serve existing vested interests directly ; to keep men's minds from threatened interests ; to secure a roaring trade for the publican, the arms manufacturer, the owners of playhouses and music-halls, etc. War means dear bread ; dear bread means big tithes for both the aristocratic and clerical tithe-owners. Hence the big minority for the Conscription Bill, and the support of Conscription by the Unionist, or rather the Class, Press. We need not pursue the matter further. Enough has been said to show the "Aims and Strategy" of those who are leading the present Conscription propaganda.

#### CONCLUSION.

The only thing left is to urge the duty of being alert and active. Military domination means the destruction of civilian freedom. It is bondage, and liberty must die where it prevails. All talk about the "Briton's first duty" is simply nonsense, when it is not worse. Is it the Briton's duty at all to lend himself as an instrument for class egotism, to let himself be a tool for the advantage of the "classes" ? "Surely in vain the net is set in the sight of any bird" ? The military net has fine meshes. If the boys of the present generation are soldierised, they will be the jingoes and fire-eaters of the next, until some bitter experience teaches them wisdom, or they are no longer hoodwinked. It is for those of us who believe in the patriotism of Peace to prove ourselves true patriots, for those of us who love our race to seek the welfare and prosperity of all we can, or as Bentham taught, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Even this may do in default of a higher motive.



